

Winter 2011

Pathos, Winter 2011

Portland State University. Student Publications Board

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LITERARY
MAGAZINE

ISSUE 14, WINTER 2011

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There is something slightly disconcerting about living in the year 2011. We have dispatched the first decade of this century like an exhausted marathon runner would dispatch an energy drink – mad and furious – but now seem stuck in the roiled and hot mess of the tween years. Our culture could be said to embody many of the characteristics of the oft-maligned (but economically coveted) tween demographic: we've blown our money at shopping malls; we like plastic trinkets, candy, and the Twilight saga; we learn lessons and forget them in the span of a television ad. Yet we are speeding ahead, dreaming of adulthood and getting our first car. We are a society in an awkward growth spurt and our acne is flaring up in the form of the homeless, the apocalyptic street preachers (there is a regular fixture at PSU who has lately been handing out tracts and holding a sign proclaiming that May 21st, 2011 will be the end of the world), and the stubborn machinery of corporate and political bureaucracy that insists upon a system of selling short.

Yet there is always art, reaffirming the unfailing nature of the law of equal and opposite reactions. They push and we pull. The order that governs governments cannot ever determine the path of the creative mind. Rather it is fodder for the imagination. The artist takes the world around them – the sacred and the hideous alike – and molds it into a reflection, a representation, of what we love and what we loathe. A wall covered in graffiti is more than a misdemeanor, and it's even more than public art. It's a projector screen for the collective consciousness. We need those forums. More than that, we need people filling them.

As for *Pathos*, our cups were overflowing with excellent work this past term. We owe a great many thanks to all of the artists who submitted material – our hats are off to you. I would also like to thank the editorial staff, and all of the people who volunteered time to make this magazine come together. I am very proud and pleased to present this latest installment of artistic expression from Portland State University.

J.E.

Staff

Pathos Literary Magazine

is a quarterly publication, produced under the guidance of the Portland State University Publications Board. All staff members, writers, and artists are PSU students. Content is chosen anonymously by a submission review committee. To contact us for volunteer opportunities, or to submit your work for review, email pathos@pdx.edu. You can also visit us on the worldwide web at pathoslitmag.wordpress.com or on Facebook.

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Colophon

This magazine was set almost entirely in Adobe Caslon Pro, a serif typeface based on the designs of William Caslon 1. The titles of the writing pieces are set in Hiragino Kaku Gothic ProN, a standardized Japanese set of characters. The *Pathos* masthead is set in Karabine, a typeface designed by Jonathan Paquette, a graphic designer from Quebec, Canada.

Let's All Go To The Lobby (to get ourselves a treat)

"The incomplete and boundless are incompatible with a teleological answer to the ontological question. Any attempt to delimit either the objective or theoretical landscape is indicative of a limited perspective and not recognition of some definitive universal. Such an approach engenders the metaphysical, which from here on out shall be referred to as *filler*. Naturally, all approaches are limited in scope. It is, however, only with the attempt to claim universality that the need for filler arises."

Sebastian Schoßkind, *Probing Vision's Tunnel*

The frames appear consecutively. Twenty-four individual moments come and go in the blink of an eye, enveloped in overwhelming darkness. But this is nothing if not a fantasy of perfect recreation. All continuity is artificial. This is alienation. The subjective experience is reduced to passivity. Here, the causal relationships are rigidly outlined within a vacuum. The content is unimportant. For the blank screen, this is enlightenment. For the hedonistic cinephile, this is a rapid increase of dopamine.

The auditorium evokes the urban reconstruction of a cave, but this audience is captive of their own accord. This is a privilege which must be paid for. Row after row of seats facing the inner wall. It is here where intuition appears to falter. Like some sermon proclaiming the divine acoustics fatal, the audience is confronted with a mediating screen, diluting the dangerous power of the source light. Still, transportation is the expected outcome – always the condescension as a pretext to transformative or transcendental movement.

Let go. Any initial turbulence is the result of a skeletal frame well-accustomed to the pressure of physical reality's illusion. Float on. Cruise. Do not brace yourself. Do not allow the muscles to tense. Remember the breathing exercises. Remember your mantra and find yourself trans-

ported. In the darkness there is a faint rolling glint of light and the occasional slap of water accompanying the rocking sensation. In your isolation the fears and worries seem the product of some obscure and distant sphere of existence. The distinct blare of rapid ammunition dispersal is reduced and muted – threat reduced to plot tensions. Dream on. Floating across the earthly experience, let your concerns be theirs. Transitional morphing delineates the moment. Chronology is abstract. You are the waves of change advancing across temporal and physical boundaries. Welcome observer.

The princess is rescued. The galaxy is safe for now. But this isn't a dissolve into darkness. Before you, a simple screen and the words scrawling across it flicker with the projected frame progression. External. What had been a soaring disembodiment is sensationalized through a pair of crackling speakers. Adjusting in a stiff plastic seat, the popping sound is your back. Yours is the rising and sinking of a chest, circulating air. Yours is embodiment. Yours is the cup, giant drops of condensed water clinging to it. Yours is the acute pressure, threatening to evacuate pungent ammonia-rich liquid down your pant leg. Yours is a state of necessity. Yours is life.

J.M.



Moment, Michael L. Hostetler



Moment B & W



Trout, Erik White

Small Things Being Small Beings

Stacey Tran

Mechanism

Thought as rings. Thought as comfort of a brown bed with warm body contours once in it. Cacophony of blues and greys. Monotony of cold, of dim. The shape a thing takes is the shape the line around it makes. Walls as stone, as paper up right. A bed not empty because it is hollow but filled with things no longer there.

Making

Nail as bed, ten or twelve as picket. As glass. Keep away from flame and fire. A hand is a room of moon and halves. Apply. The room as noon. Let dry. The room as night when words are more and touch is not just touch but close touch and some heat. Lose the light to make permanent the room and have.

Machinery

A scarlet voice opera. What throes. Doe eyes caught in a nightmare. Headlights flicker back in tiny rounds. What quick glimpse gives into the mouth filled with air. What air, black and smoke in rows and cables through cables onto page. On-off tones. Memory and code. Return to experience. Light. Return to what is known. Clicks. A portion to eat fits in the size of both palms up turned and alone. Opened but not to overflow.

Make

A box, a line in place as place. Four lines as space, as road. The strings strapped over the neck of a red cello are not mere decoration or chore. It is instrument, a vessel. Small-talk ready, pluck, and bow. It is a room a red room wood can be and what can be is statement of its work.

Anemone

Rhea Hindemit

He smelled of cardboard, and she could feel that fine dust from cut boxes falling from his clothes.

His name was Alan.

Ahhhhlan. Al-on. Al-aaan. So many ways to move the vowels through her mouth as he moved above her. It is night and no one else is working. It was an accident, that she arrived here with him, on the floor of the break room.

She had come back for her forgotten cell phone. There were messages she needed to hear, wanting to hang on every word of them, press #7 to repeat them over and over. The voice, like smoke, moving into her ears and passing over the small bones inside. She would never be able to sleep without those words, so she drove her car back to work and entered through the side door.

And this is it.

She had never known he existed, this graveyard shift specter. Alan of the lonely nights. He was wearing headphones when she came in, and her movement had startled him, causing him to slash his hand with a box cutter.

She moved with him, into the bathroom adjacent the break area. She pulled down on the toilet paper roll, and created a matted ball of it to press against his wound. He held it over the toilet and blood dripped into the still water. Together they stood and put pressure on it.

"I think it stopped," he said. The first words they had spoken, she realized, and then began the ritual of exchanging one name for another.

Alan let the makeshift bandage fall into the toilet bowl. It soaked into the water, and, at once, became something else. The blood mixed with floating toilet paper looked like some beautiful anemone. Moving so slowly, it appeared to be still. Soft and grotesque. Her eyes fixed upon it.

There was not much time between that moment and this one with Alan, and somehow it reminded her of something she had lost.



Self Portrait, Michael L. Hostetler

Eve

Courtney Gullette

I follow the dictatorial lines on a map,
the same way I slow down when I pass a
speedometer,
even though people only have two speeds:

dead

or

not dead.

I always look both ways on one-way streets.

so you may be surprised to know
that when I drop something
I don't try to catch it.

I cover my ears.

or that on rain soaked nights
before I am put to sleep,
sometimes my skull cracks.
out of the shell crawls a woman
with fire in her fingers,
and long legs for shutting doors,
and foreheads.

maybe you have seen her
above the pipes pissing off the roof,
hands hissing with wet
eyes howling their hyena call
to other quietly blazing places of the world
and my building.

I never hear her,
I imagine her
streaking up to the moon
where such women belong,
leaving no lines to follow.

but I always smell the smoke.

Amarillo, 1986

Chris Maday

I got my ass kicked once for being a “weirdo,” but that was Amarillo and that was 1986. I hated the city and it hated me, the dust and the fences and the brown, rusted metal that crowned the houses, and the way you could always hear the dust crashing against it, or sometimes, right before Christmas, the rain. It was always around Christmas, the rain, because other people had snow, and God, or someone, decided we just ought to have something. That was the only time anyone realized exactly how much dust had accumulated on their clothes and their hats and their shoes and their faces, because when it rained, the people would turn to mud. I mean mud, man, like they just climbed out of a swamp and walked on into town, down the alleys behind the movie theaters and the banks and the drug stores and the French restaurants, trying to make their way to homes they once knew but could remember little of. I remember seeing a man during a late winter rain storm kneeling in the road and scooping handfuls of mud up in his hands, spreading it all over his face and arms and neck, as if he was the kind of person that knew there was a certain time and place for everything and that was the time and that, the place. Amarillo. 1986.

Bones On Fire

Conor Lendrum

I wore my slippers out of the house again. I look up from my feet to the empty bus, checking to see if anyone has gotten on, remembering a second later that we hadn't stopped since the last time I checked. I wrap my robe a little tighter, re-tying the belt. Outside my window the night is diluted, its inky black mixed with pigments of yellow street lights, neon advertisements and the sterile white of fluorescent tubing flickering above friendly gas pumps appearing along the road, their handles always extended for a good shake. Hello! Welcome back sir, why yes I'd love to give you a bit of gasoline!

My face peers back at me in the window, the night lurking just beyond it. My eyes fail to focus on anything beyond their ghostly reflection. I feel this whale slow and stop, my seat right below the cruel spotlight of the street lamp. Why couldn't we have kept rolling, stretching out my time scrying my past in the glass? The behemoth hisses, listing to the curbside. I close my eyes and drop my chin to protect my brain from the street lamp, to stop the darkness between my ears from being diluted like the poor night.

Wet soles squeak by. The friction of leather on leather. Wet wool smell. The sour mist of the unwashed. All of this in the context of my fear, fear that must've killed me, rigor mortis freezing my muscles, a scream in each cell. This fear unique to when you can't see, but you're ringed round with villainous strangers.

Why did I close my eyes?

I can't see, can't move, they're going to get me, any moment now. A bottle to my brain. A knife to my neck, blood escaping, flowing. My robe'll be ruined.

A grain of sand falls.

Another.

Another.

Another.

The entire Sahara, one grain at a time. Then nothing. Passed over again, prey too feeble to hunt. The sport's gone out of this one. A whispered moan floats by me. Quiet, nearly lost in the sound of the AC and hydraulic breaks and the driver's radio and the varying hum of

rubber tires singing in their wheel wells. Nearly lost, like the last note played on the Titanic, surrounded by screeching metal, the cacophony of sobbing children, cowardice and panic, nearly lost but caught in the ear of one little girl with knuckles white in the fist of her mother, carried to land in her reverberating hollow places.

My eyes ease open, searching for malice, finding none. I turn slightly in my seat, the rest of the whale creeping into my peripheral vision rib by rib, seat by seat. Then, directly behind me, all the way in the back of the bus, I see the children making love. The rough-grind friction of their black leather jackets, her threadbare skirt like a tent over their sex. His hair a green fin poking out of his head, their quiet kissing punctuated by the clinks of zippers, rods, hoops, studs, bars, and chains that hang off, stick through, hold up their noses, lips, ears, tongues. Slowly she rises, knees sliding on vinyl seats. His hands press just below the shelf of her scapulas, guiding her slowly back down. His boots, with lazy tongues lolling over lax laces, are planted firm, glistening from the rain like oil spills. Her shoes, by comparison, are sickeningly childish, Sharpie marker shining on the toes and heel.

I turn away, re-re-tying my robe, shame rattling around inside my bones, shame at that old heat rising in me. A heat so long absent that my bones barely recognize it. I pull on the yellow chord, the lit sign confirming that my stop has indeed been requested. My bones on fire, my face itching from the heat, pin pricks all over stabbing my skin and tickling my pores. The AC isn't working. Where did all this air come from? There's too much, forcing itself into my nose, crawling down my throat, blistering my lungs. I need the cold, I need outside.

Wet sounds behind me, click, squeak, whisper, moan. It's them. They're making air, breathing out more than they're breathing in. A machine making gas and suffocating me. The whale slows, hisses, and I shuffle out hiding my groin with my hands, though no one is looking. The black air welcomes me, cooling me, and I gasp, taking it in. Cold in. Shame out.

When Sharron was alive, during our last fifteen years or so together, there'd been difficulties. I hadn't felt any differently toward her, but I didn't want to have sex with her. I never told her that so the lie became the truth. Something wrong with the piping downstairs, couldn't get it up. I prepared myself to tell her how it wasn't her fault, to offer reassurance of her loveliness. In actuality, any potent feeling between us had been abandoned decades earlier. But she was so kind, so understanding, so gentle.

I fumed.

Was it so easy for her to accept I was broken? Some nights, when she was kindest, I wanted her to doubt herself. Horrible screams boiled up inside me, cruel truths trapped in my mouth, the portcullis of my teeth trapping them back. Later, my swallowed truths turned to shame. The cycle would re-start day after day: a lie of biology, an anger of ego, a shame of malice. I hadn't had a natural erection since.

Standing in the dark, inside an unfamiliar bus shelter, I am twelve and embarrassed. Soon the stiffness leaves there and moves back into my joints. I shuffle down the street. An empty lot appears on my left. Across the the street to my right there's some sort of big park surrounded by a giant wrought iron fence. Massive, sweeping gates closing off the road and the paths leading into the park. Rhododendron bustle up against the bars, cedar giants gently sway to music I can't hear. Thick overhead tree branches obscure the glittering dividing lines in the road quickly fading as they stretch further into the park and disappear. The dark is perfect in there. Undiluted and thick, potent and unyielding to my probing sight. Pebbles in the road hop into my slippers as I walk towards the gate. I pull my hands out of my arm pits and bend down to pull the offending stones from my feet.

I'm blind and deaf as the car turns the corner towards me. Its headlights are lightning in my eyes and its horn thunder in my ears. It's like being born. Silence and darkness followed by tympanic sound and terrifying sight. In the dark, all I see are two expanding suns as the car swerves away from me and right into the gate of the park. The reverberations through the gate and fence are like those of a great bell, lingering and ominous, sitting just below and behind the soprano of shattering glass and the alto of the crumpling hood. When I get to the sidewalk I step back into my slippers and make my way over to the wrecked sedan, its white paint jaundiced by the street lamps. Inside, a ball of flailing limbs beats

down the silk airbag, while its hidden mouth screams curses aimed at God, Jesus, someone named Terry, the airbag, and myself.

The gate had been knocked down and the remaining headlight on the car cut a path into the park's shadowy sanctuary. Whoever had been driving was starting to free himself from his seat. I clambered over the downed fence, the single invader of this fortress, and walked into the grass, careful to stay out of the light. Soon it was perfect.

What kinds of children do this to their father? My house, my home, *their* home that they grew up in, now permanently occupied by this smiling, bright-voiced, cold-eyed woman, this *nurse*. My children, Jules and Jane, showed up at my door a few days after Sharron's funeral. Jules was such a serious little boy, everything was so gravely important, and as he grew into the man knocking on my door, he saw nothing worth relaxing for. Standing at Sharron's graveside, my son held an expression on his face so familiar that it was as if he'd been practicing for dealing with death his whole life. Jane, my darling Jane. If only I could trust you, girl. Never has a sister been so devoted to her brother. She'd do anything he asked of her. Once, when Jules was in middle school, I found him sitting on the carpet in the living room, leaning back against the side of the couch playing with a blade – wicked and black with a hook on the tip. The way it danced and darkly shone in his hand, he made it seem alive. I took it from him. His granite features showed very little if you didn't know where to look. His igneous skin stretched as his eyes slightly widened, cracked round his lips as they drew together, indignation engraved across his face. The next morning Jane was sitting in the driveway carving away at the car paint with a rock.

As they stepped into the kitchen, Jules sat down at the table, rigid and stoic, his back never touching the chair. Jane stood behind his shoulder, arms across her stomach.

"Dad," Jules started, "the time has come where we can't feel confident about your safety when you're by yourself." The way he spoke, so regulated, my stone son played his concern, but his impatience was telegraphed across his eyes. I was such an inconvenience to my children, another chore for them to check off their list.

"We know what happened with mom wasn't your fault. We understand that it was an accident and no one blames you." Dust dribbled out of his mouth as his marble innards ground together. This thing was

never my son.

"Jane, what's he talking about?" They glanced at each other, Jane questioning, Jules cautioning.

"Mom's pills. Dad, come on, this is hard enough. You know what happened," Jane said.

"What're you two talking about?"

"Who lays out the pills every morning, Dad?"

"I do. Your Mom couldn't read the labels. You know that. Why are you asking me these questions?"

"Mom died from an overdose. You gave her too many pills, Dad." Every time she'd say 'Dad', it sounded nastier.

"No, she just passed in her sleep." It was always like this. He'd tell these lies to his teachers, his mother, his friends. He'd fall down and scrape his knee and find some way to incriminate others, even his own father. Everything is someone's fault. Everyone was so happy and proud when he passed the bar exam, that he was going to be a lawyer. But what else is someone who can lie that well going to do?

"Dad, we want to hire a nurse to come live with you." And with that one sentence, the spy moved in and darkness moved out. My safe keeper, my *guard*, my albatross, my living shackle, my white-pressed, starch-sharpened warden. She, in all her glowing white, drove the darkness from my home.

"I'm concerned about the lighting in this house and what that could mean for your father," I heard her say into the phone one day.

"He doesn't sleep much, and he wanders from room to room, but so many of the bulbs are burnt out or missing completely. I'm afraid that in the dark he'll stumble and fall. It's a very dangerous situation, Mr. Frye, and I recommend you have lights installed in some of the rooms. Motion activated, preferably LED, because they go for years without needing to be replaced, they don't over heat, and they barely use any energy so it'll actually help with the lighting bill." I heard my son mumble something back over the phone.

"Why don't you let me worry about that. I've dealt with similar situations and I know just the people to call. I'll have them come look it over and I'll send you the estimate?"

Don't they understand how important the darkness is? Light as a metaphor for knowledge works great, but it is the darkness that defines things. To define is to understand. Everything is so much simpler once you're swallowed into the pitch. The coke is

rubbed into your vision, and so much of the distraction that is sight does not help us, only dilutes and detracts. Hearing, touching, smelling, tasting, and that ability to know when you're being watched, these are all we need. Sight is so easy to trick, disable, distract. For example, when I needed to escape tonight to the bus, the sight of the fire I started in the garden distracted my handler long enough for me to do just that. They're all fools, blinded by their sight.

My feet are wet. The dew from the grass as I walk through it, the water of the earth I tread on, staying with me as I shuffle through the park.

Have I been here before? It feels familiar. I stay away from the road, going deeper into the black, my hands hovering just before me and dragging across the crevices in the bark of trees, parting the leaves of bushes and plants, their cool dew running down my fingers, dripping, rolling down my sleeves to my elbows.

Soon my hands part nothing, caress no lignin, and float before me as my vanguards, ambassadors and translators of the unseen. The only light is from the sky. My sight is defeated, which makes me smile and I forge ahead into what my hands tell me is nothing, my nose tells me is fresh and alive and wet, my ears tell me is alive with rustles, chirps, drips and life. My knees smash into something hard, stone, low to the ground. My hands trace its silhouette. The perfect corners, glossy texture and carved letters betray its nature. My joints click and pop as I settle in front of the stone. The seat of my pants and my robe are instantly soaked. I feel a dimple form in the earth where I sit, the world making space for me as I settle and my bones align. The earth here is softer than what I'd been walking on. No roots, just churned earth, a rectangle slightly darker than the grass around it.

My fingers fumble across the stone face before me, tracing the furrows and the beveling, the soft tattoos worn into the hardness, and they spell it out for me.

Here lays Sharron Frye.

"...The Sable Smoke Where Vanishes The Flame"
1927-1999.

I have been here before. I fumble around for what I'd left behind. Touch comes to my rescue, the pain in my fingers telling me where the thorns are. I pick up the rose, pressing it to my nose, inhaling and smelling the wet and the perfume. Now my lungs smell like roses. What little light lingers in this place is drawn into the petals, pearly white in my memory and the only easily distinguishable pigment in this cemetery. I

feel the stones around me, leaning towards me, the dead listening to the living. What are they waiting to hear?

"Sharron." My voice sounds like strips of cheap Velcro pulling apart, their own special crackle and interference. The stones are expectant, rocking, writhing above their wards, edging closer to hear me.

"Sharron. They've got me, Sharron. I don't know what to do. She takes it, she takes the dark, but I need it. Remember when we met? I thought for sure I was dead; you my valkyrie coming to carry me to Valhalla. Maybe you did. What kind of paradise have you delivered me to, though? It was winter when you saved me. You were the first strong woman I'd ever met. It was so bright, Sharron, so blindingly bright in the snow, no dark anywhere, no shadows. I'd been skiing, then I got turned around, I was sailing backwards, I was an avalanche, all sound and chaos and cold and screaming down the hill. I hit something, and flew backwards and I heard something inside snap. I was so afraid to move, Sharron, didn't want to pierce anything, didn't want to hurt but it was hurting and everything just got brighter and clearer. I was laughing, I was so afraid. Then there you were, above me. Getting help, coming with me as the ski patrollers dragged me down the mountain, laughing all the way. You know the rest, I suppose."

I could feel the gravestones relax, settle back into their places, straightening back up, room numbers so that those who visit these residents know who's who. I'm so tired. Maybe if I just lay down here, next to Sharron. There's room. I put the flower on top of her grave, barely visible, a gray marker in this low light.

"Is there enough room here for me? You know, it must be so dark down there. I'm jealous, you know, it's so hard to sleep when there's any light on. I said 'you know' too many times, didn't I?" I close my eyes.

Perfect.

Florida

Anna Tuttle

Once, I moved to Florida.

My roommate found a little lizard squished on the bathroom floor. We all agreed it was mystery, though clearly one of us had stepped on it, and killed it. Their little bodies looked so soft, you might never know.

I helped the tourists tour, and with a straight face told them they were going on a two week long African safari. My park taught conservation, and gently asked guests to save the animals, but please buy our everything.

Some days I visited the sumptuously clean and dry malls. A store only sold sizes 1,3,5. Another only sold the M&M logo. A man in the lone coffee shop tried to woo me with tales of selling something (boats? real estate? or was it travel?) to the rich and famous. That never happened in Montana.

I don't think people go to Orlando for
the gushing afternoon showers
or for love of wet little newts
that scurry over the sidewalks at night.

I don't see why they go.



Exhale, Brett Olivieri

The Taxidermist

Cory Mimms

The room smelled like shit. They always did though, hotel rooms. Something about them just reeked. It was like all the maids were shitting under the sheets, just before they tucked their corners into neat hospital folds.

John expelled air through his nostrils in an attempt to cleanse them of the vile smell. He sat his luggage down on the bed and opened the window. The parking lot beyond the glass was just a gravel lot. Beyond that, the wet street licked the tires of trucks speeding past.

He opened his suitcase. The beaver glared up at him. His eyes squinting, his mouth open, almost smiling, one paw raised in salutation. John lifted the beaver from the case, and smiling, smoothed his ruffled fur. He sat him next to the lamp on the night stand, sliding the clock out of the way as he did.

"Get some fresh air Castor," he said, grabbing his toothbrush and walking to the bathroom. He squeezed a lump of chalky paste from the tiny tube of toothpaste next to the sink. *Nothing but the best*, he thought and chuckled.

"Nothing but the best indeed," a voice from the

bedroom whispered, stopping John's brushing in mid scrub.

John slowly turned to the bathroom door. "Hello?" he said through a mouthful of minty foam. Silence.

He stuck his head into the bedroom. The room was empty. The door was locked, and the curtains were still. He stepped into the room. The beaver eyed him from the night stand. It must have been in his head. He had been on the road too long. He was just tired.

"Quiet down Castor," he said laughing and turned back to the sink.

"My name is not Castor," the voice said, a little louder this time. "It's Rachael."

John froze. This was no hallucination. Someone was in the room with him. He plucked the toothbrush from his mouth and slowly turned, "Who's there?"

"I just told you. My name's Rachael. You're not very smart are you?"

John stepped into the room and looked about. He walked to the window and looked out onto the empty gravel parking lot. He opened the door and

thrust his head in both directions. No one was there.

"Where are you," he said, as he closed and locked the door.

"I'm here, on the night stand," the voice said.

John walked to the table. Foam dribbled down his chin. He sat the toothbrush on the bed and picked up the beaver. "But...but you're stuffed," he said. "I did it myself." His words faded into the stench of the room.

"Am not!" the voice said. "And put that stupid beaver down."

John's heart raced. He dropped the beaver on the floor. He stared at the night stand. The digital display on the alarm clock flickered and changed numbers. The soft glow of the lamp shined onto his face.

"I must be losing my mind," he said.

"Well, the mind is a funny thing. It's easily misplaced but rarely forever, like a set of keys."

"Who are you?"

"I told you that already. Rachael."

"Oh," John said staring at the table. He felt stupid. His own mind was making fun of him. "What are you?"

"You really are dense," the voice mumbled. The light from the lamp grew brighter. "I think it's pretty obvious."

"I'm talking to a lamp," John said. His mind spun thoughts like a spider's web: thin, but complicated.

"Not just any lamp," Rachael said. "I'm your lamp."

John's eyes rose from the paisley carpet. *His lamp*, he thought. Somehow, this changed everything.

"That's right. Your lamp," Rachael said.

John reached out and stroked the green shade and noticed a silver chain with a small silver ball attached to it swinging just beyond his grasp. The light gleamed off its surface. John could see his reflection in the little ball dangling from the chain. His nostrils were wide and his eyes were pinched close together, like Porky Pig.

My lamp, he thought, stepping over the beaver.

Rachael.

John fell asleep that night under the warmth of lamp light. The following morning, John packed Rachael into his suitcase and left Castor on the nightstand.

The Taxidermist



Deaed Language, Kipp Kruger

Jetsam

Megan Jones

All weekend at the beach
I ignored the sea
shells others went after
focused on red
freckled crab backs
gathering hordes in my
little plastic bucket
loving the dry crackling
rattle as they added
up, weight pulling my
cache toward shore

I took them home,
went out to the patio and
lined them up carefully
in the sun, displaying
them all in a row
darkest red to lightest
left to right next to
my sister's drying shells

Mother came out, saw
my meticulous work and
said, "You can't keep
those, Megan, they'll start
to stink." She
gathered them back
into the bucket as
I watched helplessly

Carrying them
across the backyard
she hurled them high over
the fence into our
compost pile, a few
thrown hard enough
to make it into the street

Fists clenched
at my sides, I ignored her
apologies, stood watching
as a red Buick came
over the hill, picking up
speed, then crunching
my brittle speckled
crabshells underneath

Mother

Amanda Flaker

I was twelve years old when you were buried. A winter storm drew shadows above the heads of mourners. The smell of wet dirt and dead trees lurked among the crowd dressed in long church coats. My father wore a red tie. It was the only color between the sky and the black road that curved and crept through the cemetery. It reminded me of the blood you coughed up the night before you died, the violent way it entered our world. I never knew my father before that day you traded places, but I watched his breath rise like smoke as he exhaled the dead air, releasing the winter ghost who haunted the abandoned trees.

I couldn't see faces. Only the way the black clouds formed a veil over the freshly dug dirt. I remember the tapping of the branches as they moved in the wind. I was cold. The trees were the only presence around me, and the mist rising from the earth filled the air with a thick and unmovable silence.

The pastor spoke of Lazarus, recalling his miraculous escape from death. "If Jesus wanted to," he prayed through the fog, "He could raise Ann from this grave. But alas, His will is to keep her for His purposes in heaven. May His will be done." I hated God's will, as I hated winter, and that red tie.

If you ask him now my father will say the burial was brief – only a short prayer under the snow. Your sister recalls taking me home after the earth swallowed you. She didn't realize I no longer had a home – she couldn't see the two worlds I stood between, the one with you in it, and the one without. She doesn't remember the red tie, or the way the winter ghost moved darkly through the trees. She didn't see the snow falling in my unbuckled Sunday shoe as you were lowered in the ground. My father never noticed my misbuttoned dress coat, or the way my satin ribbon came undone and tumbled in the wind, toward you.



In God We Trust, Kichi Sol

Twat Check: Wrath Of Thong

Anna Marie Brown

The g-string, the v-string, the c-string, the t-back, the tanga, the cheeky, the *fio dental* (as the Brazilians call it). Dental floss. Whatever the variation, vaginas around the globe are suffering daily, and thong underwear is to blame. Panty concerns worldwide have indoctrinated an impossibly large consumer base into accepting the intimate appliance of rubber bands as a sexy yet functional undergarment. The mainstream media, saturated with the glamorization of stripper-inspired sexuality, only exacerbate things. Pussy-strangling lingerie is a serious personal health risk, an environmental and financial nightmare, a ruthless enabler of the capitalist machine, and, above all, a grave peril to the freedom of vulvular respiration.

The ass and crotch, as everyone knows, are naturally prone to perspiration. While any reasonable pair of women's underwear acts as a sweat absorbent during times of increased physical exertion, the thong, a veritable sweat saw, rasps bacteria-laden body moisture across the danger zone in a pitiless act of dermal perineal abrasion. Providing a direct connection between the rectum and vagina, the thong is a tainted express train from point A[nus] to point B [Streptococcal], allowing even the cleanest anuses to transport bacillary passengers into the pink tunnel. All this expectant primordium needs to burgeon into a full-fledged candida blowout is one, *one* fecal microbe to embed itself with immodest purpose in the outermost walls of the vagina. The thong's primary function in any instance of bodily exertion, then, resembles that of a Bonneville Dam salmon ladder, boosting fecal matter ever closer to a spawning ground for yeast and flame.

If the habitual thong wearer is lucky enough to escape vaginitis and/or labia chaffing, she will never escape her outrageous washing expenditures. Muskiness is a fact of life, and not always an unpleasant one. However, the subtle layers of a jeans' daily crotch sweat can only accumulate a number of days before the garment is rendered fetid -- before it turns to the olfactory dark side. Because the thong lacks the perspiration and secretion-absorbing powers of the fairer-minded panty, jeans boasting an *entre-lave* shelf-life of up to two weeks under the protection of full-coverage undies come to find their freshness factor decreased nearly five-fold. Levi's good for a fortnight of sweaty clubbing are reduced to two

days of temperate, cross-legged office work. Simply put, thongs are *not* equipped to meet the demands of economy and conservationism. Excessive washing machine and laundry detergent use, increased wastewaters flowing into rivers and streams, wasted electricity, the premature aging of clothing, unnecessarily squandered income: all can be easily avoided by steering clear of this bespangled, genital tether.

The horror and madness of the thong only increase when we examine its role in facilitating the continuation of the capitalist machine. Exploitative pharmaceutical companies which both prey and profit off of a woman's compromised bacterial harmony must now fall under our lens. Pharma-business places high stakes on debasing inexpensive home remedies and natural treatments, indoctrinating their patients to entrust doctors with their health -- doctors who may or may not be bought out by big pharma. This indoctrination is so widespread that its scope extends into the drug stores, where women, swayed to the authority of western medicines, are constrained to purchase outrageously priced creams and yeast-infection treatments (\$17.50, Monistat 3 Vaginal Antifungal) for outbreaks that could be naturally and effectively handled by a few cloves of garlic and some acidophilus yogurt, for about sixteen dollars less! Women prone to vaginal dryness and/or hemorrhoids must realize that these conditions are exacerbated by the misdeeds of the thong. By continuing to purchase it, women are feeding into a hegemonic, capitalist machine that doesn't give a toot about their coot.

On an aesthetic level, the thong wearer's buttocks may be likened to a fatty poached meat bordered in pliant collagen. But women's bodies are not slabs of meat; their genitals do not merit the treatment of a tied roast-beef top round. Wake up, planet Earth! The fashion industry is now marketing thong underwear to girls as young as seven! A depraved notion from a perverted society dead set on making sexualized commodities of our precious children. Are we so keen on prepping impressionable young girls for a desecrated adulthood of patriarchal sexual fantasy and consumeristic servitude? Sweet Christ please! Let's keep thongs where they belong -- on the free and easy, summer time tootsies. And let us also find inspiration in breeze and comfort, play and flow. *True* sexiness is an aerated vagina.



Veins Of Oil, Matt Svendsen

Impossible Panther, Possible Ginsberg

Micah Dugan

When I woke up this morning I felt wrong.
I felt as if too much had happened,
regret,
desperation—
I have accepted at this point
that my desperation will be loud,
like my life,
like my death—
but then I strut out into the morning fog
burning away this dimension of ruin,
and a dead leaf tornado whirls westward
in the womb of autumn—and in that moment
I am rhythm, I am liberty,
and I am happy to vanish
into the symmetry of the city,
only to return
with grotesque visions
of grandmother gypsies
praying to the American flag,
of angelic villains
born deluded and mad
under the starred and striped
canopy of malevolence,
and of saintly students polluted
by the boulevard bible, and the streetlight kabbalah.

My professor seems to be
void of empathy,
“What is excess but escape?” he says,
his brow furrowed, pale as corpse,
so I stumble away from the halls
to the nearest whorehouse
just to say that I have seen a whorehouse.
I was disappointed.
And now I am rhythm, I am liberty,
I am hydrogen eternity
stranded naked under Korean church fluorescence,
high on soma and screaming Robert Lowell
into the plastic hallways and bombed out alleys—
the last vestiges of ourselves,
hunched down saying prayers
for the union dead
in
a brave new world.

When I returned to my dormitory
I danced, wild and alive
towards this page,
and sent a poet careening
into the black light limbo
in the chasm of infamy,
searching for nirvana
and yearning for the final lobotomy.

artist biographies

Anna Marie Brown

was born in Anacortes, Washington, in 1979. She is currently working towards her MFA in Fiction Writing. Anna is a volunteer PIC at Animal Aid, Inc., a homeless shelter for cats. She works as a writing tutor for the PSU football team.

Rhea Hindemit

is a writer and musician born in Southern Oregon and raised in the San Francisco Bay area. She is one of the 2010 winners of the Ooligan Press Editor's Choice Award for her story, "Dream Catcher." Relocated back to Oregon, Rhea now calls Portland her home.

Erik White

was born and raised in Salt Lake City. A move to Portland four years ago rekindled a passion for creating art, and I decided to follow my childhood dream. I work primarily with ink and paint but if there's a block of clay, a sewing machine, or basically anything in the room I'll play with those too. If you're interested in seeing more, check out my blog at prayfortherain.blogspot.com.

Anna Tuttle

After trying on several states and cities I have settled on Portland – for now. That just leaves deciding between the life of a writer, and that of a normal person.

Courtney Gullette

is in the MA English program. There was a mock election at her elementary school. Ross Perot won, only most kids called him Woss Pewot.

Megan Jones

is working on a double major in sociology and social science. Her poetry and short fiction have appeared in a variety of print and online journals, including HOW2, Clackamas Literary Review, and The Portland Alliance.

Brett Olivieri

I grew up in a small town in Roxbury, Connecticut. My dad was an architect and he always encouraged me to draw at a young age. I remember going down to his office and seeing all the sketches and blueprints of buildings on his drawing board and it inspired me I guess. I first started drawing weird creatures and monsters with my brother (usually inspired by HERMAN or The Hobbit Cartoon). I also remember there was always some sort of crafting going on at the kitchen table. Well, time passed, life happened, and now I am here in Portland going to school as a Graphic Design major and doing Illustration.

Conor Lendrum

Born beneath blue herons in the middle of bear season, I'm from Juneau, Alaska where I've lived 20 years. I've been writing since freshmen year of high school and I've focused my work on the relationships between people, interpersonal drama, and dynamics. I wrote "Bones on Fire" here, in Portland.

Chris Maday

was born and raised in Colorado, at the convergence of the plains and the mountains. After clawing his way through the dust and the dirt, he found himself in the Pacific Northwest, where he has been writing, studying English, and dreaming of America ever since.

Michael L. Hostetler

is an Art Practices major. He was born and raised in Union Mills, IN and moved to Portland in 2009 after serving 6 years in the military. His work references themes dealing primarily with the figure. He believes that the human form evokes a personal narrative to the viewer. The viewer can make connections to their own physicality by analyzing the figure's composition, grace, and demeanor.

Stacey Tran

is trying to write a successful sestina but is easily swayed into talking herself out of the need to do so. In the meantime, she puts on a pot of tea or two.

Micah Dugan

is a junior at PSU, a journalist, a poet, and pop culturist. His poem in this issue, like many of his other works, pay homage to his favorite poet Allen Ginsberg. Dugan also hopes to one day exist.

The Unnamed

Not all artists submitted biographical information. *Pathos* nonetheless thanks them for their contribution, and praises their joyous embrace of ambiguity.

